

Narrator:

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When American citizens think of groups promoting energy conservation, they usually don't think of the military. But the U.S. Department of Defense says that energy efficiency is good for national security, can save money for the military, and — most importantly — saves soldiers' lives in combat. The agency expects to reduce energy-related expenses by at least \$1.6 billion after investing \$780 million in new energy-savings projects between 2004 and 2011.

Such realities, coupled with a renewed focus on energy efficiency within the Obama administration, have prompted the Defense Department to set a more aggressive emission-reduction target than any other federal agency: 34 percent by 2020, instead of the 28 percent goal set for the federal government as a whole.

The United States' military is the country's largest energy consumer, and it is now embracing conservation and sustainability. The volatility of the oil market in recent years has made defense officials realize the importance of energy efficiency and reduced dependence on oil. Supply convoys that deliver fuel in combat zones are prime targets for attacks. Fewer convoys means less vulnerability, making it safer to fight a war.

Many of the projects that will help the agency achieve its goals are already under way. One of these is a \$120-million-a-year conservation program focused on making all 300,000 buildings on military bases in the United States and beyond more efficient. Project activities include insulating buildings, equipping them with solar panels, and installing electric meters to track energy consumption. All buildings of every size and shape will have meters by 2012.

On transportation, the Army announced earlier this year that it would lease 4,000 electric vehicles over the next three years for passenger transport, security patrols and delivery services at its bases nationwide. The Army is also in the early stages of testing hybrid military logistics vehicles — all part of an effort to dramatically reduce its dependency on oil.

Even in aviation, there is innovation in energy use. In March, the U.S. Air Force flew, for the first time, an A-10 Thunderbolt II military jet on a blend of biomass and conventional fuel. And on Earth Day, celebrated April 22, the U.S. Navy flew a F/A-18 jet powered by biofuel mixed with regular jet fuel.

Many officials and private sector observers are paying close attention to these developments. In the past, the military has been a key catalyst for private-sector advancement in so-called breakthrough technologies. The Defense Energy Support Center recently signed an agreement with the Air Transport Association of America, which represents all major commercial airlines, to promote commercialization of environmentally

friendlier aviation fuels. The airline industry and the Defense Department together consume more than 1.5 million barrels of jet fuel daily. If such cooperation were successful, it could have a major impact on fossil-fuel emissions.

The Defense Department is also continuing to serve as a test bed for new technology. The agency is inviting private companies to demonstrate new energy technology on military bases and is funding projects with \$30 million from its conservation budget. Such support for projects helps improve the financial prospects for alternative fuels, accelerates fuel certification efforts, and creates larger markets for innovative energy-related products.

More than 30 energy ministers and delegates from 32 Western Hemisphere countries met in Washington on April 15th and 16th to discuss cooperation on energy and climate issues affecting the region. The meeting is the latest in a series of gatherings that began in April 2009 at the Fifth Summit of the Americas, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. There, President Obama invited all countries of the Western Hemisphere to join in an energy and climate partnership.

The meeting was co-hosted by the U.S. departments of State and Energy, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Organization of American States, or OAS. U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu concluded from the discussions that there's widespread agreement to move forward with a clean energy agenda for the Western Hemisphere through clean energy development and deployment, enhanced energy security, and fighting energy poverty.

Five countries in the region — Brazil, Canada, the United States, Mexico and Venezuela — are among the 20 largest producers of fossil fuels. Yet, according to OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza, 40 million people in these areas still have no access to electricity. This situation, he said, “translates into inefficient sanitation, weak education systems and the inability to develop productive, income-generating activities.” He warned that problems caused by climate change would make the challenges even more difficult.

There is growing cooperation to meet these challenges, and several projects were recently announced. The Department of Energy will assist in exploring the potential for a Caribbean-wide transmission system that would give the region access to electricity from renewable energy sources. And an innovation center managed by the Department of Energy and the Inter-American Development Bank will coordinate resources for regional projects and activities.

The first U.S.-African Union High Level Bilateral Meetings opened at the U.S. Department of State April 21st. The goal of the meetings was to broaden the relationship between the U.S. and African Union, or AU, and deepen the level of engagement between both parties.

The three-day session included visits by the delegation to other U.S. government departments and talks with Cabinet officials such as U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder,

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk. Plans call for the meeting to be held annually.

U.S. officials said the United States is a strong supporter of the African Union — an organization with 53 African states and over a billion citizens. The United States is one of only two nations that have a dedicated ambassador to the African Union and is the largest supporter of the AU's peace and security programs.

Democracies are never perfect, U.S. officials said. And the United States stands ready to help any country striving to strengthen its own democratic institutions. The African Union received praise for its courageous stance against unconstitutional changes in governments in Mauritania, Guinea, Niger and Madagascar. The members of the African Union have made a clear decision that the AU will not be a club for generals and dictators. The African Union has taken a "pre-eminent role" in African peacekeeping, particularly in Somalia and Sudan.

Leading the AU delegation was Jean Ping, chairperson of the African Union Commission. He said his organization is convinced that Africa and the United States can build a 21st-century relationship based on shared values, mutual respect, confidence, commitment and partnership. The long history of cooperation between the U.S. and Africa has mainly been mainly at the bilateral level," he said. But the world has undergone tremendous change from globalization, participation of civil society groups, and the rise of regional organizations such as the African Union, the European Union and Mercosur.

New threats, like terrorism, the global financial crisis, piracy, organized crime, and climate change can no longer be addressed by one country alone, Ping said. Africa has a "duty and responsibility" to address its challenges. The African Union, he said, pursues an independent and strong Africa whose concerns are seriously solicited and considered worldwide.

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